

Florida Rail System Plan

Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee Organizational Meeting #2

Tallahassee, Florida

August 26-27, 2008

Introduction: August 26. The meeting began at 1:30 p.m.

The Assistant Secretary of Intermodal Transportation, Debbie Hunt, as Chair of the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee, called the meeting to order. The Chair welcomed and thanked all members for agreeing to serve on the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee and for their willingness to assist the Florida Department of Transportation with a new more visionary, strategic and policy-driven approach to developing the next Florida Rail System Plan.

The Chair reminded members the 2008 Florida Rail System Plan will be developed in two phases. The product of Phase I will be the Policy Element, which will be guided by the Advisory Committee.

This initial four meeting process is designed to help the Committee work together to establish a policy framework for setting priorities. At the end of those four meetings, the Department hopes to have as much consensus as possible on what those statewide policies should be. The Committee's recommendations will be submitted to the Secretary of Transportation and lead to the adoption of a Rail System Policy Element by the Secretary by December 31, 2008.

The Chair said the Policy Element will address the following:

- Vision, goals and possible objectives;
- Roles and responsibilities in the rail system in Florida;
- Prioritization policies focusing on statewide public benefits; and
- Recommendations to be considered in the update of the Strategic Intermodal System and the 2030 Florida Transportation Plan
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Phase II will result in a Rail Investment Element to be completed by June 30, 2009. We hope to provide an opportunity in Phase II for additional stakeholder involvement to help us identify the list of needs, prioritization methodology and other implementation policies.

This second Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee Meeting in Tallahassee will build upon the Committee's work in the organizational meeting last month in Tampa. The Committee will briefly review and hopefully close on the redrafted process goal, principles and assumption before working on refining a draft Rail System Plan vision and starting the process of developing advisory recommendations

Members Introduction

The Chair asked the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee members to introduce themselves.

Following is the list of all present members and the stakeholder they represent:

- Debbie Hunt - Florida Department of Transportation, Assistant Secretary of Intermodal Transportation, Chair
- Marion Hart - Florida Department of Transportation, State Public Transportation and Modal Administrator, Vice-Chair
- Commissioner Jeff Koons - Florida Association of Counties
- Ann Gordon - Executive Office of the Governor
- Dr. Scott Paine - Citizen
- Ben Biscan - Florida Railroad Association
- Mayor Tom Eschenberg - Florida League of Cities
- John Adams - Enterprise Florida
- Christine Kefauver - Central Florida Commuter Rail Commission
- Don Skelton - Florida Department of Transportation, District Seven Secretary
- Gus Pego - Florida Department of Transportation, District Six Secretary
- Stan Cann – Florida Department of Transportation, District One Secretary
- Denise Bunnewith - Metropolitan Planning Organization Advisory Council (Representing Mayor Richard Kaplan)
- Mary Lou Rajchel - Florida Trucking Association, President
- Richard Schuler – Florida Trucking Association, Chairman
- Drew Galloway - Amtrak
- David Rohal - Florida East Coast Railway
- David Anderton - Port Everglades
- Lisa Mancini - CSX Transportation
- Thomas Pelham - Department of Community Affairs, Secretary
- Sally Patrenos - Florida Transportation Commission (Representing Marcos Marchena)
- John Friedman - Norfolk Southern
- Keith Schue/Janet Bowman - Florida Nature Conservancy
- Sally Mann - Florida Department of Environmental Protection
- Linda Watson – Florida Public Transportation Association
- Joseph Giulietti – South Florida Regional Transportation Authority, Executive Director (Representing Bruno Barreiro)
- Richard Snedden – Miami-Dade Transit Authority

Agenda

The Chair introduced Hal Beardall and Rafael Montalvo with the Florida Consensus Resource Center. She indicated Mr. Beardall and Mr. Montalvo will provide facilitation support to the Rail Advisory Committee during the four Committee meetings. Ms. Hunt

asked Hal Beardall to review the agenda (see Appendix A) and the supporting material in your notebooks.

Following the agenda review, the Chair asked Mr. Beardall to review Florida's Sunshine Law for the benefits of those members attending the Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee meeting for the first time. Mr. Beardall noted this Committee is subject to the "Government in the Sunshine" rules. As such, all meetings will be notices and members cannot discuss with any other member any item under consideration by this Committee outside of a duly noticed public meeting. Additional information was included in the materials in the front of their notebooks from the first organizational committee meeting.

The Chair also sought a motion to adopt the first organizational meeting summary included in Tab 3. The motion was approved unanimously.

Presentations: National Perspectives

Amtrak Perspective: Expanding Intercity Corridors

The Chair introduced Drew Galloway, Assistant Vice President Amtrak Strategic Partnerships. In his presentation Mr. Galloway provided an overview of Amtrak's network and services in the nation and in Florida emphasizing the continued growth in passenger rail demand nationwide. Mr. Galloway also discussed Amtrak's vision for the future and its strategic role in supporting growing transportation and mobility needs. Mr. Galloway's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Following Mr. Galloway's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- What are the expectations for Amtrak capital provisions under current and proposed new legislation? *Amtrak is expected to receive grants ranging from \$30 million to \$120 million. Amtrak is likely to be required to match Federal contributions under current pending legislation (S294 and HR6003). AASHTO recommends a 80/20 (Federal/Amtrak) match provision consistent with other modes.*
- Population growth is declining in the Northeast of the United States, however, Amtrak ridership numbers are increasing. Could you explain this phenomenon? *Population is not declining in the Northeast, though it is not growing at a fast pace. In addition, due to rising gas prices and existing congestion levels, shifts in mode choices (from air/highway to rail) are beginning to occur. Passenger rail is increasingly becoming the preferred mode of travel in Baltimore, Philadelphia, and New York.*
- You stated no new equipment has been purchased in recent years, however your projections show significant growth in demand for passenger rail, are you assuming you will have sufficient equipment capacity to accommodate future projected growth? *This is correct, Federal contributions for new equipment will be needed in order to meet and sustain projected demand.*
- The corporate goal is to increase ridership while reducing the dependence on Federal money, how can this be achieved? *We are pursuing new technologies to reduce costs and reorganize the way Amtrak operates.*

- Will there be more pressure on states to contribute to Amtrak's plans to increase ridership in light of reduced Federal contributions? *Because of shifting demands some Federal corridors will become state sponsored.*

Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007

The Chair introduced Charles Quandel with Quandel Consultants, LLC. In his presentation Mr. Quandel provided an overview of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act of 2007 and discussed the implications of S294 on passenger and freight nationwide and in Florida. Mr. Quandel's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Following Mr. Quandel's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- What are the capacity thresholds beyond which we should seek to build separate tracks for passenger and rail services? Has this issue been analyzed in any of the currently available studies on rail transportation trends and forecasts? *All rail studies are completed in coordination with freight railroads. State and Federal agencies are aware they cannot degrade current or future freight rail capacity to support passenger rail needs.*
- Reliability and delay are issues facing passenger rail service on shared tracks. We should not replicate highway congestion on railroads. *Better planning will help achieve improved reliability and reduced delay for passenger rail services. Freight railroads will continue to have movement priority on the State system since they own most of the tracks in Florida.*
- The State of Florida doesn't currently have a dedicated source of funding for regional rail. There is a 50 percent local match requirement for regional and public transportation needs while road projects are fully funded by the State. Furthermore, Federal match requirement are increasing the pressure on local/regional government to secure additional funding to support their individual needs. Current local funding match requirement is 40 percent on average up from 20 percent in the past. *Tax credit bonds could fund up to 60 percent of major passenger rail projects. The remaining 40 percent can be funded through a combination of State and private funds.*

Federal Funding Opportunities for Railroads

The Chair introduced Mark Yachmetz Associate Administrator for Railroad Development with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA). In his presentation Mr. Yachmetz briefly discussed the various funding opportunities which are or will be available (through S294 and HR6003) for railroads. According to Mr. Yachmetz, various programs through FRA currently help fund railroad safety and infrastructure needs.

Following Mr. Yachmetz's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- In your experience, what percentage of authorized dollars for Amtrak is appropriated in any given year? *In 2002, Amtrak received approximately 50 percent of authorized dollars.*

Planning, Programming and Funding at the Florida Department of Transportation

The Chair introduced Kathy Neill, Director of the Office of Policy Planning at the Florida Department of Transportation. In her presentation, Ms. Neil discussed the State's role and responsibilities in funding transportation needs. Ms. Neil also provided an overview on existing revenue sources, current planned transportation investments and how these relate to the Department's goals and objectives, and the impact of revenue reductions on the Department's Work Program. Ms. Neil's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Following Ms. Neil's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- Given the shift in mode choice now occurring in Florida (road ridership is declining and the demand for other modes is increasing), there needs to also be a shift in priorities at the programmatic level and more emphasis should be given to support mass transit. *The Department is continuously working with local governments and Metropolitan Planning Organizations to address the shift in mode choice. Florida's new Transit New Starts program was created to help support the State's transit needs. The Department is also looking to work more closely with the Department of Community Affairs and local governments on land use policies and plans and how these can support increased reliance on non-highway modes.*
- Governor Crist recently announced a new economic stimulus package to help focus available resources on activities to keep Floridians employed and sustain the State's economy. The plan is entitled: "Accelerate Florida: Extending Florida's Economic Horizons". The Plan appears to be focusing primarily on highway investment projects. This plan does not appear to be consistent with the shift in transportation trends currently taking place.
- Investments in non-highway modes benefit the environment. However, the majority of transportation investments in Florida benefit highways, how will the Department respond to the growing environmental concerns facing the State? *The Governor's Task Force on Climate Change is currently looking at Florida's shifting transportation and economic trends and their impact on the environment and will provide recommendations on best transportation investment strategies for the future.*
- In your presentation you discuss the estimated State investments in transportation through 2035, are declining gas purchases factored into your calculation? *These projected numbers currently do not account for the impact of increased gas prices on roadway usage. Forecasts are updated periodically.*
- Are gas taxes the primary source of revenue for transportation projects? If so, are revenues generated from gas taxes only dedicated to fund highways needs? *Transportation projects are funded through a variety of revenues including the gas tax. These revenues are placed into the State's transportation trust fund and distributed to all modes.*
- According to your 2035 estimates, only 2 percent of State investments in capacity projects will be dedicated to rail projects. Rail's share in transportation capacity investments appears low. *Rail projects can receive additional funding through the State's growth management program.*

- How much funding from managed lanes revenues is dedicated to transit projects? *Funding for transit is currently not available from managed lanes revenues. Revenues from Phase I of the I-95 managed lanes are dedicated to maintenance projects and to finance Phase II of the I-95 managed lanes project.*
- How many communities have taken advantage of the State's Transit New Start Program? *A few counties and municipalities have taken advantage of this new program including Miami-Dade County.*
- Federal New Start Program funds are scarce and highly competitive.
- Public transportation is experiencing a rise in ridership and demand as a result of high gas prices. However, with the emergence of new and more efficient auto technologies, the reliance on cars and highways is likely to increase again.
- How did you estimate the dollar amount to be dedicated to fund capacity projects by mode? *Capacity funding shares by mode were calculated based on current funding practices and policies.*
- Transportation projects are funded primarily through Federal and State gas taxes; however, the Department is looking to increase investments in non-highway modes. This will likely decrease funding revenues and affect future investment decisions. At what point can you no longer fund mass transit because of decreasing revenues. *The Department is looking at new methods and techniques to generate funds for transportation needs.*
- What percentage of total toll revenues in Florida is dedicated to fund transit needs? *Toll revenues are currently used to fund maintenance and capacity projects.*
- How many transit facilities are currently designated to the SIS? *Transit facilities are not designated to the SIS as they do not serve Florida's statewide needs; however, commuter and intercity services can be designated to the SIS.*
- What percentage of SIS funds are dedicated to commuter and intercity services? Also, what percentage of SIS funds are dedicated to freight rail needs? *The goal of the Department is to dedicate 75 percent of the Department's transportation funds to SIS facilities. This includes corridors (highways, rail, and connectors) and hubs (seaports, airports, intermodal facilities). The remaining 25 percent is dedicated to non-SIS projects.*
- How has funding priorities shifted over time? Has the share of funds for non-highway projects increased since the implementation of the SIS? *The Department will provide an answer to this question to all Committee members.*
- 25 percent of transportation funds going to non-SIS facilities is not sufficient to support local needs. Counties are struggling to identify resources to fund their highway and transit local needs. Since local gas tax dollars are currently not indexed many localities are funding transit operations with capital dollars.
- The Department investment decisions affect where development will occur. As such the Department should promote investments designed to limit urban sprawl and promote urban infill.
- Impact fees should be dedicated to fund transit projects.
- In the past, 50 percent of all transportation resources were dedicated to fund highway projects. With the implementation of the SIS, 75 percent of transportation dollars are now dedicated to fund transportation projects of statewide significance. The SIS does not limit investments to highways only but also includes rail, airport, and seaport

projects. The SIS concept addressed discretionary funding for the purpose of making strategic investments, and included flexibility to look for the best projects.

- It is challenging to justify the benefits from investing in passenger rail projects in Florida given current land use densities.
- Central Florida Commuter Rail was recently authorized to move forward into the final project design stage. Central Florida Commuter Rail is one of five projects out of more than 300 competing projects selected by the Federal Transit Administration nationwide.

Finalize Process Goal, Principles and Assumptions

The Chair asked Mr. Beardall to review the revised process goal, principles and assumptions from the organizational meeting in July. Mr. Beardall asked participants to turn to the material in Tab 5 in the handbook. Mr. Beardall asked Committee members to:

- Review the revisions made to the process goal based on discussion at the first meeting.
- Review the initial acceptability rating for the revised process goal as compiled from the pre-meeting survey.
- Review any suggestions offered for addressing any “2”s and “1”s.
- Solicit concerns/suggestions for improvement based on ranking, focusing first on “1”s, then “2”s.
- Review the revisions made to each principle and assumption and repeat the process listed above.

Process Goal Statement Discussion

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed language of the revised draft goal statement. (Responses to member’s comments are shown in *italic*)

- Combine Alternative Version 1 and Alternative Version 2 into one comprehensive version.
- Include the word “transportation” between “other” and “mode” in the last sentence of Alternative Version 1. The sentence will read as follows: “...in passenger and freight rail transportation and recommend policies to guide future state planning and investments in rail, and future integration of rail with other transportation modes”
- Add “statewide and regional” in the last sentence in Alternative Version 1 before “state planning and investments”. In doing so, you would have combined the two alternatives into one. The last sentence will read as follows: “...in passenger and freight rail transportation and recommend policies to guide future statewide and regional state planning and investments in rail, and future integration of rail with other modes”
- There is a difference between a vision and a vision statement. Is this the intent of this first exercise? *This first exercise is intended to finalize the language on the process goal. The Committee will have a separate opportunity later today to discuss and revise an initial draft vision.*

Following is the final revised draft process goal statement:

“The goal of the Florida Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee process is to create consensus recommendations to inform and guide the development of the statewide 2008 Florida Rail System Plan in compliance with FS 341.302. The Florida Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee, will review trends, needs, issues, and opportunities (local, regional, statewide and national, to the degree they affect Florida) in passenger and freight rail transportation and recommend policies to guide future statewide and regional state planning and investments in rail, and future integration of rail with other transportation modes.”

The revised draft process goal statement will be revised based on input from Committee members.

Draft Principles Discussion

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed language of the revised draft guiding principles for the process. (Responses to member’s comments are shown in *italic*).

Principle A:

No revisions or comments on Principle A

Principle B:

Comments on Principle B:

- If the language under Principle B1 is not drawn directly from Florida Statute, suggest replacing the word “*insure*” with either the word “*support*” or “*ensure*”.
- The language under Principle B1 should include a reference to the need to preserve natural resources consistent with s.334.046 Florida Statutes. The last sentence should read as follows: “...and preserves the quality of life and natural resources of our communities.”
- Calling for the need to preserve natural resources or the quality of life of communities may be an issue as this is not consistent with the Department’s mission.
- Preserving natural resources and the quality of life should not be deleted from the language under Principle B1 since according the s.334.046, “The mission of the Department of Transportation shall be to provide a safe statewide transportation system that ensures the mobility of people and goods, enhances economic prosperity and preserves the quality of our environment and communities.”

Principle C:

No revisions or comments on Principle C

Principle D:

Comments on Principle D:

- The third bullet under suggestions (see Tab 5, Page 6 on the green sheets) is withdrawn.
- Put Principle D1 before Principle D.

- Should we limit our consideration of funding to a 20-year horizon?
- Principle D2 should read as follows: “The 2008 Florida Rail System Plan should identify and address funding needs for rail necessary to implement passenger and freight rail systems.”
- Strike the word “*necessary*” under the revised Principle D2.
- Should the Rail System Plan be drafted based on 2008 conditions given the anticipated policy changes for 2009 (new Federal legislation, new Florida Transportation Plan, update of the SIS Comprehensive Plan, etc.)? *If new policies are adopted in 2009, the Rail System Plan will be amended accordingly and if necessary. Note, the process to fully implement new policies and plans is generally not rapid.*

Mr. Beardall indicated staff will redraft the proposed guiding principles to include revisions suggested by the Committee.

Draft Process Assumptions Discussion

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed language of the revised draft process assumptions. (Responses to member’s comments are shown in *italic*).

Assumption A:

No revisions or comments on Assumption A

Assumption B:

No revisions or comments on Assumption B

Assumption C:

No revisions or comments on Assumption C

Assumption D:

No revisions or comments on Assumption D

Assumption E:

Comments on Assumption E:

- Strike “*with guidance from the Committee*” from the text. It is understood the Chair will make decisions consistent with Committee discussions and recommendations.

Mr. Beardall indicated staff will redraft the proposed guiding assumptions to include revisions suggested by the Committee.

Draft Roles and Responsibilities Discussion

Mr. Beardall quickly reviewed the only suggested change received for the roles and responsibilities: deleting “*ex officio*” from the role of the Department of Community Affairs and Department of Environmental Protection.

The Chair asked members if they had any additional concerns about the proposed language of the draft roles and responsibilities. No comments or concerns were raised.

Following this discussion, the Chair sought a motion to adopt the revised process goal, principles and assumptions, and roles and responsibilities included in Tab 5. The motion was approved unanimously.

Review and Refine Draft Vision Statement

At the request of the Chair, Mr. Beardall asked members to review the language on the vision statement in Tab 7 (blue page). This statement has been prepared by the facilitators based on Committee discussion at its first meeting on July 29 and 30. The draft vision statement was sent to Committee members ahead of time for review in preparation for discussion today. Mr. Beardall asked members to review and rank the goal statement with a 3, 2, or 1 with a show of hands and to note any additional suggestions, rewording or concerns they may have. A ranking of 3 indicates “I can support as is”; a 2 indicates “I can support this, but would like to see the following changes...”; and, a 1 indicates “I cannot support this unless serious concern(s) are addressed as follows...”.

Initial Acceptability Rating of the Vision and Annotation

3 – 18 members

2 – 1 member

1 – 1 member

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed language of the vision statement and annotation, and to suggest any revisions to address their concern. (Responses to member’s comments are shown in *italic*).

- The descriptive or “annotated” text under the vision statement is very ambitious and cannot be achieved by year 2030.
- The vision statement is appropriate and realistic. The annotation should be revised and a more accurate explanatory narrative should be drafted.
- It is important to have an inspirational statement, which is the purpose of the annotation. The annotation should not be revised.
- Revise the first sentence in the annotation to read as follows: “...The State of Florida *aspires* to develop a rail system that provides safe, seamless, interconnected passenger and freight mobility...”
- Consider deleting “*It is the year 2030*” from the annotation text.
- Revise the first sentence of the annotation to indicate this is an inspirational statement.
- The annotation is intended to be inspirational and help raise awareness among the public on the need for investments in non-highway modes to support Florida’s economic, environmental and community needs. The message is Florida should not continue to dedicate its limited resources to continue to widen I-95 and I-75.
- The annotation reflects the aspirations of Committee members; however, average Floridians may have different priorities for the future that may not include a world class transportation system.
- The language in the annotation should reflect an aspiration Floridians could buy in to. Rail should be a means not an end.
- Delete the following sentence: “*The system is viewed as a model nationally and worldwide*” from the annotation text.

- Florida needs an efficient transportation system and not necessarily the most extensive transportation system.
- The last sentence in the annotation language discusses the benefits from investing in a fully integrated multimodal transportation system. The description should be revised to also describe the benefits to citizens.
- Revise the first sentence of the annotation text to read as follows: “The State of Florida has *developed* a rail system that provides safe, seamless...”

The Chair asked the facilitators and staff to work with five Committee members including Scott Paine, Keith Schue, Lisa Mancini, Janet Bowman, and Denise Bunnewith to redraft the proposed vision statement and annotation to include revisions suggested by the Committee and offer it back to the Committee for further review and possible adoption.

Review and Refine Themes and Issues

At the request of the Chair, Mr. Beardall’s asked members to turn to the green sheets in Tab 7. The worksheets were emailed to Committee members in advance of the meeting to help members prepare for this discussion. These worksheets contain vision themes based on those identified by Committee members at the first meeting. Under each theme are the issues Committee members also identified at the first meeting. “Example goals” and “example objectives” are included for the first two themes. These are provided only to illustrate format and the relationship of goals and objectives to the themes. They are not intended to reflect all of the issues related to the theme, and are not intended as drafts. Committee members will briefly review the themes and refine them on Day One, if necessary, to serve as a framework for drafting goals and objectives during the breakout sessions on Day Two.

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed Themes, Goals and Objectives. (Responses to member’s comments are shown in *italic*).

- We need to emphasize the need to work with Florida organizations to take advantage of Federal funding.
- Energy efficiency or effectiveness may need to be addressed in the proposed themes. The Committee should work closely with the Governor’s Climate Action Team on developing themes, goals and objectives pertaining to environmental and energy issues.
- Since Florida is a donor state, more effort should be deployed in ensuring more Federal dollars are invested in Florida.
- The Committee should recommend a better tool to evaluate the benefits and costs of investing in all modes. This would help to make more informed investment and policy decisions.
- Better describe what “no free freight” means.
- Quality of life is currently not discussed in the proposed themes. We need to ensure rail investment decisions support community needs and quality of life.
- The Committee should discuss the topic of transportation users’ affordability.

- The Committee should emphasize the need for a more balance multimodal investment policy. Highway projects may be fully funded by State dollars whereas rail projects generally require a 50 percent funding match.

The facilitators reminded the members they would work in two breakout groups the following day. Each group would be assigned four of the themes and would work with a facilitator to guide discussion. Committee members would be asked to think about possible goals and objectives under each theme to be presented back to the full Committee for consideration as possible recommendations.

Review and Refine Initial Draft Report Outline

At the request of the Chair, Mr. Beardall's asked members to turn to the white sheets in Tab 7 and review the draft report outline. The outline presents the initial thoughts on what the final Committee report may look like and include.

The Chair asked members if they had any concerns about the proposed initial draft report outline. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*).

- The Committee members are interested in working with the Department to help develop a successful Rail System Plan.
- The Plan should emphasize the need for more coordination between transportation and land use decisions.
- Transportation investment decisions affect land use development.
- Is this Plan intended to be comprehensive? *The level of detail in the Rail System Plan will depend on the Committee's recommendations and discussions. We are required to draft a policy element for this Plan by December 31.*

General Public Comments

The Chair stressed the importance for input from the public as this process moves forward and offered all members of the public the opportunity to speak to the group from the microphone. No public comments were offered on Day One.

The Chair noted additional opportunities for input through the public comment form (available at the sign in table) and online (<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevel.htm>) are available. Any written comments received will be shared with the Committee members, she added.

Day 2. The meeting began at 8:30 a.m.

Breakout Group Review and Discussion of Themes and Issues

Facilitators Hal Beardall and Raphael Montalvo asked their respective breakout groups to turn to worksheets in Tab 7. As noted on Day One the worksheets contain vision themes based on those identified by Committee members at the first meeting. Under each theme are the issues Committee members also identified at the first meeting. "Example goals" and "example objectives" are included for the first two themes. These are provided only to illustrate format and the relationship of goals and objectives to the themes. They are not intended to reflect all of the issues related to the theme, and are not intended as drafts.

The themes are intended only as a framework for developing more specific statements about goals and objectives. Each breakout group was assigned four of the themes. Each breakout group worked with a facilitator to guide discussion. Committee members were asked to think about possible goals and objectives under each theme to be presented back to the full Committee for consideration as possible recommendations.

The following are guidelines for developing possible goals and objectives.

- Goals – Broad statements of desired outcomes. Committee members may develop one or more than one goal per theme, as seems appropriate.
- Objectives – Specific actions, measurable whenever possible, which will result in progress towards the goal. Committee members may develop as many objectives for each goal as seems appropriate.

Group Reports and Plenary Discussion

Following the breakout sessions, the two groups reconvened in a plenary session to share and discuss their initial suggestions for proposed goals and objectives. Below are the group reports within each of their assigned themes and the subsequent plenary discussion.

Blue Group Report

A. Increased emphasis on the role of rail in transportation

Ideas for possible goals and objectives:

- Review the policy for the distribution of SIS dollars as it relates to highways, rail and other modes of transportation.
- Conduct cross-benefit analyses between modes and between project alternatives within the same mode. The cross-benefit analysis tool will help to make more informed investment decisions and prioritize projects.
- Achieve broad public support for investing in rail at the regional and local levels.
- Additional emphasis is needed to support investment in transit in urban areas.

Plenary Comments:

- Regarding the joint public and private use of transportation facilities, we need to address how the public and private sectors will continue to work together to invest in transportation capital improvements.
- Additional emphasis is needed to support investment in freight needs as well.
- More investment in transit in urban areas is a bottom-up process, investment in freight is top-down process. As such, freight needs can be easily incorporated with local plans. More State-local coordination is required.
- A similar cross-benefit tool was recommended by the Red Group.

B. Maximized use of existing infrastructure

Ideas for possible goals and objectives:

- The Department should support alternative studies to help the public better understand the Department's investment decision and the value/cost of investing in a wide variety of projects.
- Theme B should be revised to read as follows: "Give priority to consideration of existing infrastructure" or "integrate existing infrastructure to extent possible".
- Work with the Department of Community Affairs and the Florida Department of Transportation to create laws providing incentives for those investment decisions promoting infill development.
- Provide financial incentives for land use decisions, which support Transit Oriented Development.
- There is a need for better coordination and understanding of seaports, rail, airports, etc. planning efforts and how local efforts can support those plans.
- Consider alternatives to the current concurrency system - create weighted concurrency credits, concurrency bonuses, or an alternative mobility fee, which is broadly assessed.

C. Better system integration (operations), and coordination (design and project development) – state and regional levels

Ideas for possible goals and objectives:

- The State should work harder to leverage State dollars with Federal matching funds.
- Improve system integration between freight and passenger rail – and connections with other modes of transportation.
- The Committee should emphasize the need to review and implement best practices from other states on integration of land use changes to maximize coordination between the various modes of transportation.
- The Department's District Secretaries should work with Metropolitan Planning Organizations to ensure better coordination on investment and planning needs. A bottom-up planning and investment process is needed to support local needs.
- Emphasize the need to foster cross coordination between Metropolitan Planning Organizations on rail opportunities. The Department should provide incentives to support regional rail coordination and reduce disincentives. Regional coordination led to the formation of the Tampa Bay Regional Transportation Authority.

Plenary Comments:

- The Committee should ensure adverse impact of transportation investments on local communities is minimized. Quality of life of local communities is an important consideration when investing in transportation and should therefore be addressed in a goal or objective statement.
- As a donor state, Florida should work with the Federal government to receive more Federal funding.
- We need to show we can operate rail for 20 years to convince the public of the need to invest in rail projects.

- We need to be more aggressive in promoting rail programs in the State of Florida.
- Why does the cost/benefit ratio of investing in passenger rail in other states outweigh ours? *Because other states have plans to continue building passenger rail. For example, the State of New Jersey set up a trust fund.*
- Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) dollars could be used for planning for very specific, targeted corridors, with authorization from the Secretary and District Secretary.
- Additional dollars should be set aside to help the Florida Passenger Rail Study move forward.

D. Increased private/public and public/public partnerships to improve competitiveness and efficiencies

Ideas for possible goals and objectives:

- Develop clear processes for negotiating public private partnerships that are efficient, effective, and respect legitimate concerns for confidentiality and public concerns for disclosure.
- Ensure a balance between public and private needs.
- It is the responsibility of public officials to ensure the public understands the impacts and benefits of public-private partnerships– the benefits need to be clearly laid out up front.
- Allow Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) dollars to be spent on regional multimodal planning.
- Expand the Charter County Transit System Surtax option to all counties

Plenary Comments:

- One of the main concerns of the private sector regarding public-private partnerships is how long it generally takes to establish these partnerships.

RED GROUP REPORT

E. Appropriate funding levels

Statements:

- Ensure maximum flexibility in State plans and procedures to optimize opportunities to use Federal dollars.
- Evaluate rail projects as part of an overall multi-modal transportation policy that looks at the potential benefits of all modes to meet a particular need.
- Develop a project assessment methodology tool to weigh the full range of quality of life, environmental and other important factors. Develop criteria to account for the following:
 - Private support
 - Partnership support
 - Density

- Impact on land use – potential for shaping land use in desirable ways
- Impact on quality of life
- Impact on air quality
- Emissions of harmful pollutants, including greenhouse gas emissions
- Environmental sensitivity
- Larger, multi-jurisdictional purpose
- Regional differences
- Reevaluate percentage allocation of transportation dollars by mode.
- Legislature should provide additional funding sources including:
 - Bonding
 - Additional gas tax
 - Local option sources
 - Tax credits
 - Tax increment financing
 - Other
- Ensure formulas for prioritization are equitable across different components of the system – freight, passenger, other.
- The Legislature should ensure allocation of all transportation-related revenues in the State to transportation.
- The Legislature should make it easier for local governments to exercise local options.
- Promote understanding of the economics benefits of rail. Develop or disseminate information about studies demonstrating this (Return on Investment).

Recommendations to the Blue Group

- Study rail initiatives in other states.
- Work with private railroads and railroad operators to identify needs.

Plenary Comments

- Include consideration of costs of not doing a project.
- There are concerns about recommending a gas tax increase. The recommendation should be revised to read as follows: “The ~~Legislature~~ government should make it easier for local governments to exercise local options”.

F. Appropriate land use decisions at state and local levels

Statements:

- Develop a State vision for rail with regional components.
- Regional Planning Councils, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, State and Regional Transportation Authorities should convene planning processes to integrate rail and land use at the regional level.
- Encourage/provide incentives to local governments to promote land use patterns, make maximum use of rail, and are supportive of transit.
- Promote economic and industrial development along existing and new rail corridors.

- Require consideration of rail in the land use and transportation elements of comprehensive plan.
- Provide tax credits for rail investments designed to promote desirable land use patterns or economic development.
- Consider impacts on communities, grade separation whenever possible.
- Consider “state pre-emption”.

Plenary Comments:

- Consideration of rail in comprehensive plans may not be applicable to all communities. This should be limited to those communities served or potentially served by rail.

G. Flexibility to respond to opportunities and changing conditions

Statements:

- Should the State of Florida have authority over all permitting decisions within a corridor?
- Implement the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process for early coordination of project and corridor review.
- Promote and support better communication between Florida Department of Transportation modal offices, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, economic development organizations and other agencies to explore and respond to opportunities.
- Develop procedures to modify the Department’s District five-year work plans on an annual basis (in ways that do not affect committed projects) to respond to opportunities. Provide mechanisms to carryover funds remaining unallocated at the end of each funding cycle for this purpose.
- Enhance tracking mechanisms to identify available funds.

Plenary Comments:

- Do the five-year work plans currently not allow adjustments? *Adjustments are made on a yearly basis.*
- What would be sufficient justification to provide protection for the unallocated funds? *Criteria should be developed to provide protection for unallocated funds.*

H. Environmental sustainability

Statements:

- Implement the Efficient Transportation Decision Making (ETDM) process for early coordination of project and corridor review to identify potential environmental issues.
- Call for early coordination, even before ETDM, between agencies and stakeholders, to identify environmental issues before significant costs have been invested.
- Encourage consideration of the environmental and economic benefits of rail in large regional visioning and planning efforts.

- The Florida Rail System Plan should highlight environmental benefits, smaller environmental footprint, of rail.
- Use transfers of corridor ownership, corridor improvements, or other projects as opportunities to address existing environmental issues.
- Educate the public about the environmental and other benefits of rail to increase understanding of and support for rail.
- Use environmental benefits of rail as factors in the project assessment methodology (see Theme E).
- Regional Planning Councils, Metropolitan Planning Organizations, the Florida Department of Transportation and other agencies and partners should make explicit in regional plans the environmental consequences of various different modal mixes in corridor and regional planning.
- Use carbon credits and green credits to promote desired land use patterns or projects. If a project can be linked to a beneficial public investments (in this case rail), provide tax or other credits.

Mr. Beardall indicated staff will work with Committee members to review and update the proposed goal and objective statements and offer them back to the full Committee for further review and discussion. Mr. Beardall noted a teleconference for each breakout group will be scheduled before the third Committee meeting to further discuss and refine the proposed goals and objectives.

I-95 Corridor Coalition and Southeast Rail Operation Study

The Chair introduced Marygrace Parker, I-95 Corridor Coalition's Program Coordinator for Freight Mobility, Safety and Security. In her presentation, Ms. Parker discussed the progress to date on the Southeast Rail Operation Study. Ms. Parker's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Panel Presentations: Florida Passenger and Freight Rail Perspectives

The Chair introduced Nazih Haddad, Florida Department of Transportation of Passenger Rail Development. In his presentation, Mr. Haddad discussed the proposed intercity passenger rail service in Florida. Mr. Haddad's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Following Mr. Haddad's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- In your presentation, you discuss potential corridors for Florida Intercity Passenger Service, has the Department selected a preferred alternative? *A preferred alternative will be identified after discussions with CSX.*
- What is the role of Amtrak in this proposed passenger rail service? *Amtrak will assist the Department in identifying infrastructure needs. State resources will be mainly used to fund those needs.*
- What is the maximum freight rail operation speed? *60 mph is the maximum speed; however, freight trains usually operate at a lesser speed.*

- How do you mix freight and passenger rail trains when each system operates at distinctively different speeds? *There are operation and capacity studies that address this issue.*
- How much would it cost to travel from Orlando to Tampa on the proposed intercity passenger rail system? *The cost will depend on market demand and how much the State is willing to subsidize passenger rail. Currently a one-way passenger rail trip from Los Angeles to San Diego costs \$38 compared to \$100 from Washington DC to New York City.*
- Are quad gates built for safety reasons to protect drivers? *Quad gates are required by law if trains will travel above 110 mph. Grade separation at crossings is required if trains will travel above 125 mph. Quad gates also help with noise reduction and traffic calming.*
- Municipalities should have some financial responsibility in building quad gates.

The Chair introduced Mark Hardgrove, principal with Planning Innovations, Inc. In his presentation, Mr. Hardgrove provided an overview of existing Federal and State transit and passenger rail programs. Mr. Hardgrove's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>.

Following Mr. Hardgrove's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. (Responses to member's comments are shown in *italic*)

- The Federal government has indicated it will fund 80 percent of total project costs through the New Starts Program; however, funding contributions have not exceeded 50 percent of total project costs over the past five years.
- Even if transit project are fully funded with Federal dollars, given the current appropriations process, it make take up to ten years for projects to be fully funded.
- Rail is currently not a priority in Florida. We need to reach out to all key players and policy makers in the State and seek their support for implementing a robust and well-connected rail system in the Sunshine State.
- Is the Department currently funding passenger rail projects? *Not at this time.*

The Chair introduced Bob Romig, senior associate with Cambridge Systematics, Inc. In his presentation, Mr. Romig provided an overview of existing Federal and State funding opportunities to support passenger and freight rail needs in Florida. Mr. Romig's presentation can be found at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>. Following Mr. Romig's presentation, the Chair opened the floor for questions. No comments or concerns were raised.

General Public Comments

The Chair stressed the importance for input from the public as this process moves forward and offered all members of the public the opportunity to speak to the group from the microphone. No public comments were offered on Day Two.

The Chair noted additional opportunities for input through the public comment form (available at the sign in table) and online (<http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandevl.htm>) are available. Any written comments received will be shared with the Committee members, she added.

Next Steps

In her concluding remarks, the Chair thanked Committee members, the public and staff for their participation in, support of, and contribution to the Florida Rail System Plan development process. The Chair

- Urged members to visit the Florida Rail System Plan website at <http://www.dot.state.fl.us/rail/plandev.html>;
- Informed the audience that the vision statement, themes, goals, and objectives will be revised by Committee members and presented to the full Committee at the next meeting on September 30 and October 1 in Fort Lauderdale;
- Indicated a meeting summary for this first meeting will be available for review; and
- Asked members to complete the evaluation form contained in their handbooks before adjourning. (See Appendix B for meeting evaluation summary)

The Chair passed out a calendar form for November seeking acceptable alternative dates for the final committee meeting. The Chair also reminded members to discuss today's meeting and the materials with their respective constituencies prior to the next meeting on September 30 and October 1 in Fort Lauderdale to keep their constituencies informed and seek broader input.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:30 PM.

APPENDIX A:

**Florida Rail System Plan
Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee – 2nd Meeting
Tallahassee, Florida
August 26-27, 2008**

"Even if you are on the right track, you'll get run over if you just sit there." - Will Rogers

"Plan for the future because that's where you are going to spend the rest of your life." -- Mark Twain

Proposed Meeting Objectives

- To review and seek agreement on organizational issues for the Advisory Committee, including process goal statement, principals, roles and responsibilities, work plan and schedule and committee guidelines;
- To receive informational briefings on the context for developing the 2008 Florida Rail Plan;
- To review and refine and initial draft vision statement;
- To review and refine key vision themes and related issues;
- To agree on next steps and assignments for the third Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee Meeting to be held Sept. 30 – Oct. 1, 2008.

DAY ONE

- 1:00 Opening Remarks and Agenda Review**
- 1:15 Panel Presentations on National Perspectives**
- 2:15 Finalize process goal, principles and assumptions**
- 2:45 Break**
- 3:00 Presentation on Planning, Programming and Funding in Florida**
- 3:45 Review and refine draft vision statement**
- 4:15 Break**
- 4:30 Review and Refine Themes and Issues**
- 5:00 Review and Refine Initial Draft Report Outline**
- 5:25 Review Public Comment Received**
- 5:35 General Public Comment**
- 5:55 Review Schedule for Evening and Day 2**
- 6:00 Adjourn for the Day**

Florida Rail System Plan
Rail Stakeholder Advisory Committee – 2nd Meeting
Tallahassee, Florida
August 26-27, 2008

DAY TWO

- 8:00 Coffee**
- 8:30 Review Agenda for Day Two**
- 8:35 Breakout Group Review and Discussion of Themes and Issues**
- 10:00 Break**
- 10:15 Continue Breakout Group Review and Discussion of Themes and Issues**
- 11:45 Working Lunch**
- Presentation: I-95 Corridor Coalition and Southeast Rail Operations Study
- 1:00 Breakout Group Reports and Plenary Discussion.**
- 2:00 Panel Presentations: Florida Passenger Rail Perspectives**
- 3:00 Public Comment**
- 3:15 Next Steps**
- 3:30 Adjourn**

APPENDIX B:

MEETING EVALUATION SUMMARY

**Florida Rail System Plan
Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee - 2nd Meeting
Tallahassee, Florida - August 26-27, 2008**

Proposed Meeting Objectives

☺	☹			☹
<u>Agree</u>				<u>Disagree</u>
<i>CIRCLE ONE</i>				
<u>5</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>1 =Avg.</u>

WERE THE MEETING OBJECTIVES MET?

• Review and seek agreement on organizational issues for the Committee including process goal statement, principles and assumptions, and roles and responsibilities;	6	9	4	0	0 =4.11
• Receive informational briefings on the context for developing the 2008 Florida Rail System Plan;	4	11	3	1	0 =3.95
• Review and refine initial draft vision statement;	4	8	6	0	0 =3.89
• Review and refine key vision themes and identify related issues; and,	2	12	4	0	0 =3.89
• Agree on next steps and assignments for the third Rail Stakeholders Advisory Committee meeting to be held on Sept. 30 – Oct. 1, 2008	6	6	4	0	0 =4.13

MEETING ORGANIZATION

☺	☹			☹
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• Background and agenda packet were helpful	7	9	2	0	0 =4.28
• Presentations were effective and informative	9	7	2	1	0 =4.27
• Plenary discussion format was effective	5	7	7	0	0 =3.89
• Breakout discussion format was effective	9	4	6	0	0 =4.16
• Facilitator guided participant efforts effectively	11	4	4	0	0 =4.37
• Participation was balanced	7	6	6	0	0 =4.05

What Did You Like Best About the Meeting?

- Opportunities for all to present thoughts.
- Location.
- Facilitators did a great job of keeping discussion timely and focused.
- Presentations.
- Location was good.
- Pretty good mix/format.
- Well done- no suggestions.
- Presentations of information.
- Remarkable emergence of commonalities of concern and fair amount of shared perspective on those concerns. I am hopeful that we can have some solid consensus recommendations to move the rail plan forward.

What Could be Improved?

- **Nothing!**
- Better communication/ideas of what outcome (not results) will look like. Group is still talking in generalities/philosophical. Focus on realistic plan.
- Couldn't see the screen very well- should have been in all bold.
- Need the data on other states and regions on Rail and Intermodal.
- Keep meeting moving.
- Allow more time, but I don't know how.
- More time for discussion.
- Lack of time to make specific recommendations. Seems like we're surfacing issues, but little time to talk about solutions. Product could be better with an additional meeting.
- Essential "Leaders" speak up otherwise risk losing focus.
- Send materials to review earlier. Need at least 5 days to respond when we travel often.

Other Comments (use the back if necessary):

- Intimidated by suggestions that comments made were too local. All issues are local.
- Do we need to 'force' participation from those who rarely speak?